

Enjoying Green Spaces and the Natural Environment – Awards 23-4

Applying Organisation	Awarded Amount	Grant Description
Downlands Trust	£12,408.00	£12,408 towards the cost of educational activities and volunteer task days over 2 years on the South London Downs.
Epping Forest Heritage Trust	£14,700.00	£14,700 for a 1-year bespoke community engagement to increase and involve the diversity of people attending Epping Forest.
Friends of West Ham Park	£5,500.00	£5,500 over twelve months towards community planting of 150m hedging, crocuses and other early flowering plants in West Ham Park to increase biodiversity and provide a teaching resource.
Tinder Sticks CIC	£14,830.00	£14,830 for staffing and equipment costs to deliver three projects in Epping Forest, taking place over the spring, summer, and autumn months.
Sustrans	£11,952.00	£11,952 for a community engagement project to work with a group of volunteers to better connect Kenley Railway Station to Riddlesdown Common.
Capital Kids Cricket	£14,245.00	£14,245 over 12 months for sessional coaches and associated project costs to run girl's physical activities and cricket sessions at Heath extension.
	£73,635.00	



Enjoying Green Spaces and the Natural Environment

Assessment Pack 2024

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CENTRAL GRANTS PROGRAMME

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Enjoying Green Spaces and the Natural Environment

Downlands Trust (ref. 22227)

Amount requested: £12,408

Amount recommended: £12,408

Purpose of grant request: Boosting Beautiful Bird Song on the South London Downs: increasing opportunities for Londoners to experience Yellowhammer and Skylark song.

The Applicant

The Downlands Trust (DT) was created as a charitable trust in November 2008 to promote, for the benefit of the public, the conservation of the natural environment through management of the countryside, and to advance education in conservation and management of the environment. It is run by volunteers, primarily, though not exclusively, through supporting the aims and work of the Downlands Partnership established in 1988 to introduce and maintain countryside conservation and management schemes across Northeast Surrey and adjoining parts of South London.

Background and detail of proposal

DT are looking for funding to increase the opportunities for Londoners to experience the songs of two steeply declining bird species on the Red List for Birds; the Skylark and Yellowhammer. The work aims to educate visitors to the South London Downs NNR about the importance of these sites for both species through 2 guided walks a year and onsite information posters, in order to retain their habitats. Additionally, DT would train new volunteers to manage the scrub habitat for Yellowhammers and create temporary fenced Skylark plots, to monitor the population of both birds with the aim of increasing the number of successful breeding pairs recorded on the sites. The grant will be used over a 2 year period to cover the cost of recruiting volunteers, 16 volunteer task days, on site information posters, and materials and equipment to build (and dismantle) the temporary fencing around Skylark territories, and scrub management for Yellowhammers.

Without the funding from the City of London, the project would not be able to go ahead as DT wouldn't have the opportunity to focus on the project. DT have been funded under the Enjoying Green Spaces Programme 3 times, and rejected 2 times. In 2022 the panel moved to decline the application as it was felt the project had become over reliant on the grant programme. DT have also submitted a revised budget in case of full funding not being available.

Financial Information

DT is in a healthy financial position and will be viable for the duration of the grant. DT hold larger reserves than expenditure to ensure funds are available when projects

arise. In the year ending 31st July 2023 DT reserves were more than double their reserves policy, at £125,983 (target £60,000). This was due to uncertainty around sponsorship; DT are sponsored by Fidelity and at the time of application are unsure if the sponsorship will continue.

Recommendation

This application meets the programme criteria as it will connect local communities and visitors with South London Downs NNR through education on the importance of this site for two iconic bird species, as well as engaging local volunteers in actively managing the sites to benefit the species. Through guided walks and onsite information posters, visitors to South London Downs will have improved knowledge of the biodiversity of the space, and conservation value of the space would be improved through management of the habitats with the aim of increasing the number of successful breeding pairs recorded on the sites. As both the bird species are steeply declining and of Conservation Concern 5 (the Red List for Birds 2021), DT deem this project essential to safeguard existing populations and support recovery of these species. Funding is recommended as follows:

£12,818 towards the cost of educational activities and volunteer task days over 2 years on the South London Downs.

CENTRAL GRANTS PROGRAMME

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Enjoying Green Spaces and the Natural Environment

Epping Forest Heritage Trust (Grant ref: 22246)

Amount requested: £14,700

Amount recommended: £14,700

Purpose of grant request: To deliver a bespoke community engagement programme to engage more people from diverse communities in Epping Forest.

The Applicant

Epping Forest Heritage Trust (EFHT) is a charity that works towards engaging the community in conserving and protecting the forest. EFHT was created in 2018 when Friends of Epping Forest was merged with the Epping Forest Centenary Trust. The charity strives to curate engagement with the Forest of all members of the community through programmes, walks and events.

In 2021, EFHT received a CGU grant of £14,000 towards new signage at Epping and Loughton tube stations plus new Big Walk map to encourage people to visit the Forest by public transport. In 2023, they received £67,000 over two years to support new conservation activities from City Bridge Foundation.

Background and detail of proposal

EFHT is seeking £14,700 of funding to deliver a bespoke community engagement programme to engage a diverse range of people of colour through partnering with multiple organisations. EFHT prioritises the protection and the future of the forest and recognises that outreach is fundamental to do so. They have demonstrated significant planning by reaching out to local authorities, contacting over 100+ organisations and currently have between 8 and 9 that are planned to be involved. These include Wanderlust Women and Wanderers of Colour. EFHT is working in a horizontal way, leveraging existing relations to continue searching for suitable partners to work with. As part of their bespoke events, each walk necessitates researching and identifying the appropriate community partner, agreeing the most appropriate type of event, securing a licence, getting feedback, debriefing and learning from the event.

The plan is for a 1-year engagement where they listen to the needs of marginalised groups, what the community asks for and using their connections to build their network in which their outreach is both in person and digital. EFHT has already planned a project with Muslim Hikers for April 2024 who requested a walk with over 200 sign ups, evidence of high participation. EFHT conducted a reconnaissance and developed an accessible route in response. They also consider inclusion for families, partnering with The Hive which works with forest activities for kids. Your Officer is confident that this programme is a necessary project that engages with the needs and wellbeing of marginalised groups who have no or little connection with nature and the forest. This will have a significant impact on how marginalized groups engage with such space.

EFHT recognises that this gap exists reinforces their capacity to provide and outsource their resources to work on this gap. They are taking part in championing diversity outdoors and outreach is the foundation for the bespoke events.

Walk management requires at least 2 trained volunteers and the team are made of a community engagement officer, marketing manager and multiple volunteers, who will also be re-imbursed as part of the programme. If awarded, the grant will be used to cover the costs for research of community partners, digital marketing outreach including platform costs, Volunteer recruitment and management to support events and Line management, finance and reporting.

Financial Information

EFHT is currently in a strong financial position with significant free unrestricted reserves more than three years' expenditure. This is due to fall to two years by the end of the current financial year (i.e., March 2023). The high level of reserves is a one-off situation as the result of the merger of Friends of Epping Forest with Epping Forest Centenary Trust. EFHT has demonstrated good financial management in planning to spend these reserves down in a way that will best place it to continue its work in the long-term. This involves spending reserves on organisational infrastructure whilst applying for charitable funding for project costs. Charitable funding will enable EFHT to sustainably meet its strategic goals after it has spent down its reserves. EFHT's strategy was drafted with support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Although the Grants Unit would not normally fund projects where an organisation has sufficient assets to self-fund, in this instance your Officer recommends an exception on the basis that the level of free unrestricted reserves is a result of a one-off merger in EFHT's operational history. Whilst EFHT has already begun to spend down the funds by investing in and strengthening its core capacity, it has made a strategic decision to apply for charitable funding for service delivery and build relationships with funders so it can continue operating sustainably once its reserves have been spent down to appropriate levels over the next couple of years.

Recommendation

EFHT proposes to work with several key marginalised expert groups to deliver a bespoke community engagement programme to engage more people from diverse communities in Epping Forest.

Your Officer is confident that EFHT can deliver successful events that respond appropriately to the needs of marginalized communities who have little access the City of London's green spaces. They have run several efficient events prior and are well-prepared to expand their database of organisations to partner with and continue delivering specialised bespoke events with marginalised groups. Funding is recommended as follows.

£14,700 for a 1-year bespoke community engagement to increase and involve the diversity of people attending Epping Forest.

CENTRAL GRANTS PROGRAMME

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Enjoying Green Spaces and the Natural Environment

Friends of West Ham Park (ref. 22380)

Amount requested: £5,500

Amount recommended: £5,500

Purpose of grant request: Community planting of 150m hedging, crocuses and other early flowering plants in West Ham Park to increase biodiversity and provide a teaching resource.

The Applicant

Friends of West Ham Park (FoWHP) is a Voluntary Constituted Organisation set up by a group of residents in 2006 that use the park regularly and want to be involved in park management. It sees its role as enhancing the park and facilitating public use of it through nature observation and educational activities. Its events can bring up to 250 people to the park, which receives around 2.2 million visitors a year. FoWHP members work closely with the West Ham Park (WHP) team and helped staff the park during the Covid-19 pandemic. FoWHP has run several planting projects in the park in the past around the tennis courts and South Meadow. The group has around 20 active members.

Background and detail of proposal

FoWHP has worked with the WHP team to put forward this proposal to engage the community to plant 150m of hedging, crocuses, and other early flowering plants in a section of West Ham Park. The intention is that these plants for early pollinating will increase the park's biodiversity and provide an educational resource for local schools.

Funding is requested for mechanical ground preparation, hedging, wildflower plants and bulbs. FoWHP will work with community group Growsie to access low-cost plants. FoWHP expects around 100 volunteers consisting in local families to take part in the ground preparation and planting over two weekends in the autumn. Volunteers will be split into small groups lead by both a member of the WHP team and a FoWHP member. This will form part of the programme of activities the WHP team are running to celebrate the park's 150th year.

FoWHP indicated that the WHP learning team would cover the costs of permanent signage, as per its usual responsibilities. The organisations would work together to invite local schools, which they have good connections with, to benefit from the additional teaching resource. Those schools include Rosetta Primary School, Bobby Moore Academy and Elmhurst Primary School. FoWHP also hopes to include observing the butterflies that come as a result of the planting in its regular bird watching walks from spring 2025. FoWHP will publicise the volunteering opportunity as well as the new hedging, planting and expanded walks on its website and social media and will seek to be featured in local press.

Financial Information

FoWHP is a small organisation that operates on a project basis, applying for grants to put on free events. Having received two grants from the Enjoying Green Spaces grant strand in 2019 for £14,550 and in 2018 for around £12,000, the group has shown itself to be capable of managing a grant of the requested size. There are no concerns about the financial viability of the organisation for the duration of the grant.

Recommendation

FoWHP's proposal will meet the Enjoying Green Spaces criteria by connecting communities with their green spaces, in particular local children through the opportunity to learn about pollination. It will also improve the biodiversity of the park. Although its volunteer numbers seem ambitious, I am confident FoWHP will continue to work closely with the WHP team to co-ordinate a successful community planting activity which will result in a beneficial resource. Funding is recommended as follows:

£5,500 over twelve months towards community planting of 150m hedging, crocuses and other early flowering plants in West Ham Park to increase biodiversity and provide a teaching resource.

CENTRAL GRANTS PROGRAMME

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Enjoying Green Spaces and the Natural Environment

Tinder Sticks CIC (ref. 22290)

Amount requested: £17,420

Amount recommended: £14,830

Purpose of grant request: Connecting underserved communities with Epping Forest. Exploring nature, building outdoor confidence, and empowering people to return.

The Applicant

Tinder Sticks CIC (TS) is a registered community interest company (company number 11256511) which works to make nature more accessible to all. TS have ample experience of delivering outdoor education with people across a diverse range of backgrounds, having previously ran focused initiatives with LGBTQ+ youth, BAME groups, NHS workers and those on low incomes, some of which have been funded by previous City of London grants.

Background and detail of proposal

The applicant is aware from anecdotal evidence that many people in the communities local to Epping Forest do not have access to green outdoor space at their homes, have never ventured into the forest before, and in some cases are wary or even fearful of the forest. Whilst acknowledging the benefits of getting out in nature to mental health and wellbeing, TS's proposal seeks to connect underserved communities with their local green spaces in Epping Forest. By providing forest skills, knowledge, and confidence, the project aims to empower these groups to return and enjoy the forest in their own capacity.

The project has been carefully designed with three strands to cater to different age groups, and the applicant will also be working closely with the Open Spaces Learning Team, to ensure its work supports and compliments existing provisions. Beneficiaries will gain an understanding of respecting the forest, learn about the changing seasons, engage in outdoor play, and develop outdoor skills, such as building campfires and wild cooking. All sessions are planned to be held between May and November 2024.

The first strand of the project, Little Owls, caters to under 5s (with their parents) and had a successful run at Wanstead Park in 2023. TS found demand for Little Owls extremely high in 2023, with all sessions being oversubscribed. As such, TS are keen to replicate last year's programme in Wanstead Park, as well as extend the programme to a second location in West Ham Park. It was agreed in conversations with TS and the Open Spaces Learning Team that the number of sessions for this strand of the project could be reduced to meet budget requirements. It is recommended that this strand is reduced to 18 sessions (allowing for 9 in each

location) from the 24 initially planned by TS. It is hoped that 15 children (with one parent each) will attend each Little Owls session.

The second strand, Growing Wild, has been designed for the families of local school children who are already engaging with the Open Spaces Learning Team. Currently the Learning Team do not have capacity to extend their existing provisions to involve parents/other family members. The applicant intends to bridge this gap, knowing that for some children, their school outings may be the first and only time in the forest. TS will be flexible to demand around Growing Wild participants, with the potential for each event to host 5 larger families, or 15 children each accompanied by one family member.

Finally, the Youth Wellbeing Project targets young people not in education or employment (NEETs). This strand of the project will deepen the impact of existing introductory-level forest sessions provided for this group by the Open Spaces Learning Team. These sessions will allow the young people to continue their outdoor education and nurture their skills with more specialist provisions, e.g. in bushcraft activities. Each Youth Wellbeing session will accommodate 12 participants.

Financial Information

TS is a small CIC, whose income and expenditure is on an upward trajectory. The significant increase in income in YE 2023 can be attributed to TS's directors transitioning the company from a part time to full time enterprise.

After making a small deficit in YE 2022 due to returning to project delivery post-pandemic and rising living costs, TS made a profit in YE 2023, with profitability predicted to continue into YE 2025. As such TS's negative reserves, primarily of directors' loans, are reducing.

Recommendation

The application made by TS to run a series of outdoor skills sessions for underserved communities around Epping Forest is clearly consistent with the aims of the Enjoying Green Spaces Programme, and the sub-theme of connecting communities with their green spaces. Based on its current activities, the applicant has identified a need and appetite for the proposed project in the local communities. This sentiment has been echoed by the Open Spaces Learning Team, who believe TS can deepen the impact of their current provisions. The applicant's experience of providing outdoor education for diverse groups, and outstanding field knowledge assures they are the right organisation to carry out this work. Your officer recommends funding as follows:

£14,830 for staffing and equipment costs to deliver three projects in Epping Forest, taking place over the spring, summer, and autumn months.

CENTRAL GRANTS PROGRAMME

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Enjoying Green Spaces and the Natural Environment

Sustrans (ref. 22351)

Amount requested: £14,952

Amount recommended: £11,952

Purpose of grant request: A community engagement project to work with a group of volunteers to better connect Kenley Railway Station to Riddlesdown Common.

The Applicant

Sustrans is a charitable company (number 326550) which was established in 1989. The organisation grew out of a Bristol based cycling campaign in the mid-1970s, which sought to convert a disused railway line between Bristol and Bath into a safe cycling route. The charity is now the custodian of the National Cycle Network - 5,000 miles of traffic free infrastructure - and is responsible for maintaining, updating, and developing cycling and walking routes across the UK, whilst also seeking to make it easier for people to walk and cycle. The charity works across the United Kingdom. It has, in recent years, become increasingly focused on putting inclusion at the heart of its activities and ensuring that the voices of underrepresented groups can shape places, and that everyone can thrive without having to use a car. The charity, which consists in built environment experts, undertakes advocacy and consultancy work.

Background and detail of proposal

Sustrans is requesting £14,952 to carry out a community engagement project to work with a group of volunteers to better connect Kenley Railway Station to Riddlesdown Common.

With Sustrans' expertise in conceptualising streets as places, this project came from discussion between the charity and the Farthing Downs Rangers, who are currently working together on the Downs. A project manager and project officer at Sustrans will work with the rangers to recruit a group of around six volunteers to spearhead the development of a way-finding path to lead people from the station to the common. The rangers receive interest in volunteering from lots of people, but the activities they usually require volunteers for are quite physical – this will provide an opportunity for those who are not able to engage in more intensive work to give their time. The start of the path will be a vacant part of the station, a garden previously managed by the City of London Corporation, which will be rejuvenated by planting chalk grassland wildflowers, juniper and trees found on the common.

The volunteer group, alongside Sustrans staff, will consult with children from Harris Primary Academy Kenley on potential signage and recommendations for infrastructural changes (around the traffic islands, for example). Sustrans is very experienced in consulting with young people on built-environment projects and have materials, including emoji signs, to make discussing the topic accessible.

Funding is requested for the staff time spent on scoping and delivery, as well as materials. Scoping costs include volunteer recruitment, stakeholder mapping, scheduling of activities and project management. Delivery costs include staff time on the school workshops, commuter engagement and wayfinding design. The materials requested are gardening tools, printing, and signage, although the organisation suggested the signage could be possible sourced from elsewhere, such as Croydon Council, if necessary.

Financial Information

Sustrans is a large national organisation with a turnover of approximately £125 million, making small annual losses/profits. It holds around £10 million in reserves, approximately £7 million of which is designated to provide cover for unexpected changes in income and £3 million has been identified as long-term reserves available for investment. There are no concerns about the financial viability of the organisation for the duration of the grant.

Recommendation

This project will meet the Enjoying Green Spaces criteria to connect communities – in this case local, and from further afield - with a green space, in the long-term. Sustrans' expertise in place-making and co-design will ensure that staff and a range of community members create an effective wayfinding design proposal.

I have provided a reduced recommendation removing the budgeted £3,000 signage costs, as Sustrans will need permission from Croydon Council to erect those. Sustrans has suggested it would use this project to leverage further funding from the Council to bring the project to life. Funding is recommended as follows:

£11,952 for a community engagement project to work with a group of volunteers to better connect Kenley Railway Station to Riddlesdown Common.

CENTRAL GRANTS PROGRAMME

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Enjoying Green Spaces and the Natural Environment

Capital Kids Cricket (ref. 22357)

Amount requested: £14,245

Amount recommended: £14,245

Purpose of grant request: The funding will be used to run girl's physical activities in Heath Extension from February to August 2024.

The Applicant

Capital Kids Cricket is a youth development charity that uses cricket as a tool to improve social, emotional, and physical health of disadvantaged children, young people, and families across London. CKC have been delivering cricket sessions in London schools for over 30 years. Along with supporting the charitable aims, the club acts as a community hub geared towards developing skills in young people that extend beyond those required to play cricket.

Background and detail of proposal

CKC is looking to build partnership with Canons Cricket Club to increase and sustain cricket provision in Heath extension for girls. Canons CC are a recently established girls only cricket club, set up by volunteers/ parents wanting to provide an opportunity for their daughters to play cricket. As outlined in the application, the project will commence in February with targeted sessions in schools and later move the activities to the park. The idea is to increase the interest in cricket amongst girls which CKC believes will increase number of attendees in new cricket session. Female coaches will deliver these sessions. Additional to this, CKC plans to organise matches, cricket festivals and holiday camps which will engage family members and increase the utilisation of green spaces. The organisation also plans to engage with the learning team at the park to create awareness of the green spaces and build a greater connection between the park and the participants.

CKC allows the participants to shape the work of the club by taking regular surveys, conducting activities such as participants designing club kits, logos, getting team names, etc- thereby giving the sense of ownership.

CKC have successfully carried out a similar project in West Ham Park and have reported success for the same. Building on their previous experience, CKC believes that this grant will enable them to engage and generate interest in cricket amongst girls in Heath Extension. The aim of the project is to increase the number of young girls playing cricket and the added benefit of bringing different groups and communities onto Heath Extension.

CKC has confirmed that it will be able to go ahead with the project should the City of London Corporation be unable to fund the full requested amount, with an alternate budget reaching fewer schools, reducing number of sessions and beneficiaries.

Financial Information

CKC is a medium-sized charity with an annual turnover of approximately £415.30k. The organisation has a deficit of £12,628 for the financial year 2023. CKC have healthy reserves- approximately £70k over their reserves target. The officer is confident that the organisation will be in a good financial position throughout the grant period.

Recommendation

This is a good project that has articulated how it meets the outcomes of the 'Enjoying Green Spaces' Programme. This application is focused on providing increased cricket provision for girls in Heath Extension. CKC have a good a history of delivering a similar project in West Ham Park. At assessment CKC showed good rationalisation for delivering a girl's cricket session on the park and are looking for support to cover the set-up costs along with Canon CC. Although this project is not exclusively about connecting communities to the green spaces a good argument has been made about how targeted work with women and girls will encourage more use of the park, with additional health benefits. CKC has applied for a project that will satisfy both the objectives of the 'Enjoying Green Spaces Programme' while delivering to its own charitable objectives. Funding is recommended as follows:

£14,245 over 12 months for sessional coaches and associated project costs to run girl's physical activities and cricket sessions at Heath extension.